Queensland Government

Healthier. Happier.

Can you lose weight eating with your mind?

Can you lose weight eating with your mind?

Everybody stand up.

Now, if you eat while watching TV, sit down.

If you check your phone or computer while you're eating, sit down.

Chew and read the newspaper? Sit down.

Talk to family or friends, or even just day dream while you're eating? You sit down too.

So to anyone still standing, that lady way, way down the back there, congratulations, you may just be a mindful eater.

If you haven't heard of mindfulness, it's going through a big popularity phase at the moment. As more and more of us are distracted by our many screens and busy lives, the push to live in the moment, broadly known as mindfulness, has gained significant momentum as an aid to everything from parenting, to better sex, to pain management.

And of course, healthy eating.

Read on and it might just be the easiest thing you've ever done to improve your healthy eating. At the very least, it can't hurt to try.

Mindfulness works like this; be in the moment. Put the brain blinkers on and focus 100% on what you're doing, feeling, thinking and saying RIGHT NOW! It's not unlike meditation and it comes with a host of similar purported benefits, from happiness to mental health to physical health.

When it comes to food, mindfulness is an exciting prospect.

You see 'mindless eating' is a problem. Picture this, you're at a restaurant having a great time with friends, talking, laughing, nodding, and all the while your fork is on autopilot. Before you even realise it, you've knocked off your spaghetti carbonara, the garlic bread and someone else's chips, even though you were 'full' ten minutes ago.

And that's just the tip of the iceberg; mindless eating occurs when we reach automatically for snacks while at work, when we eat while staring at the TV/phone/computer/screen-of-choice, when we snack out of boredom, procrastination or habit rather than hunger… the reality is many people have lost touch with using hunger as the trigger to eat, and fullness as the trigger to stop, and as a result we often overshoot the mark and consume more kilojoules than we should.

So stop!

Mindful eating is not a diet, it's simply an approach to consuming food. To try it, wait until you are actually hungry, then think about what you're eating. Take in the look of the food, the smell of the food, the feel of it, the taste of it. Every. Single. Mouthful.
Eat it slowly. Savour it. And listen to the signals from your body, particularly when you feel full.

Not only will you enjoy the food more, you'll give yourself two chances of stopping before you eat too much. Firstly you'll be more aware of just how much you've consumed and that 'satisfied' sensation, and secondly, by slowing down, you'll give you stomach time to register what's going on; there's a lag time between swallowing the food and your brain registering you're full. This can take up to twenty minutes. So if you wolf down that pizza too fast without thinking, your taste buds will still be calling for more before your stomach has raised the alarm.

The other trick to mindful eating comes after the fact. Think about how the food made you feel. Did you feel energised or heavy? Bright and alert or 'food coma'. What you'll find is that better foods will leave you feeling better. And certain foods will leave you feeling fuller sooner. If you're really keen to explore mindful eating with different foods, keep a food diary.

The main thing is to give it a try. Remember, the more you practise, the better you'll get. You might be surprised at just what a difference it makes.

If you're looking for some healthy meals to start your mindful eating experiment, check out our recipes section.

Subscribe for the latest updates

Enter your email address

Subscribe

© The State of Queensland (Department of Health) 2016

Queensland Government